Idaho Geospatial Committee   **May 30, 2002**

INSIDE Idaho: INTERNET CLEARINGHOUSE FOR IDAHO GIS DATA

BOISE, ID – The Idaho Geospatial Committee (IGC) has announced the selection of the INSIDE Idaho (Interactive Numeric Spatial Information Data Engine) website, operated through the University of Idaho, as the State of Idaho's official statewide geospatial data clearinghouse.

A Geographic Information System (GIS) is the high-tech equivalent of a conventional paper map and constitutes computer systems capable of holding and analyzing data describing location. Unlike a paper map, where "what you see is what you get," a GIS combines many layers of information for viewing and/or analysis.

The website (http://www.insideidaho.org) is a cooperative data sharing effort between the University of Idaho and many federal and state agencies and local communities. The site demonstrates how government-collected and distributed data can be made more readily accessible to the public – data previously available only through requests to agencies or by visiting a library.

 From the INSIDE Idaho homepage, viewers can access a multitude of geospatial and numeric data for research and learning; a tutorial covering various aspects of the site; a calendar of events, making visitors aware of GIS-related conferences, workshops, and meetings; as well as aerial photographs of much of Idaho.

With the involvement of U.S. Senator Larry Craig, the University of Idaho Library was awarded a 1999 Congressional Appropriated National Leadership grant by the Institute of Museum and Library Services, making INSIDE Idaho possible.

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Governor Dirk Kempthorne, through Executive Order 2001-07, recognized the need for a statewide geospatial clearinghouse by directing the IGC to "identify and promote a State geospatial information clearinghouse." The State's Information Technology Resource Management Council (ITRMC) also encouraged the IGC's efforts to establish the clearinghouse. IGC members voted in April to formally recognize INSIDE Idaho as the State's geospatial clearinghouse.

According to Pam Ahrens, ITRMC Chairman, INSIDE Idaho supports Governor Kempthorne's vision for enabling efficient, digital government and promotes cost-effective, collaborative efforts between state and local government. INSIDE Idaho also serves as a facilitator, bringing people and agencies together to form partnerships, and to exchange technological expertise.

"This is a wonderful opportunity to minimize duplication of effort, to foster cooperative digital data collection activities, and to take advantage of limited fiscal resources," Ahrens stated.

Nathan Bentley, State GIS Coordinator and IGC member, says the success of the site is also due to the voluntary cooperative efforts of federal, state, local, and private organizations throughout Idaho, and the expertise of the INSIDE Idaho project team.

"By making efficient use of appropriate and emerging computer technologies, we can share data, resources, and expertise to meet the increasing demands for spatial information by government and business professionals, as well as our citizens," he said.

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